



# Libraries and law firms in Italy

Ewelina Melnarowicz, Federica Vignati

## 1 Introduction

At the core of this study on law firm libraries in Italy is a professional experience of the authors in a law firm to reorganise and manage the library service. At this juncture, looking for examples and solutions adopted in a similar context, there is a dearth of literature in Italian referred to libraries, law firms and corporate libraries generally. Regarding legal public libraries, see the contribution of Rosa Maiello at the IFLA 2009 Conference ("Law Libraries in Italy"). Searches carried out in major LIS databases have not given any relevant publications on this topic in Italy. Instead some interesting starting points can be found in online contributions of lawyers and managers of knowledge management services. For example, see the contribution of Gaia Bassani Antivari presented at the 11° Meeting ACEF ("Gestire La Conoscenza Per Migliorare L'efficienza e Garantire Continuità Al Cliente"). Therefore, in the first instance we have considered the importance of verifying the spread of libraries in Italian law firms by analyzing resources, tools and services through a questionnaire

submitted to the 100 major Italian law firms.<sup>1</sup> Particular attention was given to the human resources in charge of the library and to their professional profile. In this study, we have often used the term *knowledge management* referring in a rather inclusive way to all the activities connected to the retrieval, usage and communication of information. More specifically, we distinguished between the term library, used here as the management of all the knowledge generated externally to the firm, and the term knowledge management, as the management of the knowledge generated in the firm, in order to avoid ambiguity and for a better comprehension of the activities involved. You may see Profili and Capitani (*Il Knowledge Management: Approcci Teorici e Strumenti Gestionali; Il knowledge management*) to gain familiarity with knowledge management. All the answers were firstly collected and then mapped against the information provided by the law firms on their web sites. The publication of the results of this study is intended to be a first approach to provide insight into the spread and the organization of the Italian law libraries and to initiate a discussion on the professionals involved in their management.

## 2 The study

### 2.1 Sampling

When defining the sample, it has been chosen to take in consideration the major Italian law firms by revenue and the number of

---

<sup>1</sup>The journal Top Legal publishes annually a list of the first 100 Italian law firms by revenue, calculated on the previous year. In addition to revenue the article reports the number of lawyers and other economic data on the state of the legal market. The reference for this study is the list for the year 2012, based on the data of the 2011 (Di Carlo). The list comprises of 102 firms, two of which closed down their practice. The sample therefore consist of 100 law firms.

lawyers employed, since this could guarantee greater possibilities to find structures dedicated to knowledge management. As pointed out previously, the population consists of the 100 Italian law firms classified annually by the journal *Top Legal*. The choice of this source, being a household name in the legal community, could be a valid standard for the respondents to the questionnaire.

## 2.2 Methods

In this investigation, we decided to use an online questionnaire to reach a numerous and geographically dispersed population, even if limited to Italy. For more information on this research methodology see (Pitrone; Agnoli). The preliminary phase of the survey focused on collecting e-mail addresses in order to send the invitation for participating in the questionnaire, in the following order: in the first instance if available, email address of the library manager or of the head of knowledge management; then, if unavailable, an email address of the firm; at last, if when there was no answer, email address of one of the associate lawyers. Apart from retrieving email addresses, we undertook an analysis of the law firms web sites with the purpose to identify a library, knowledge management services and publishing activities.<sup>2</sup> The analysis of the web sites has been the fundamental step to verify and validate the results of the questionnaire. This recipients of the questionnaire received an email containing a link to the questionnaire and a short presentation of the research and its purposes. For the management of the questionnaire

---

<sup>2</sup>Starting from the list cited previously, between August 2012 and January 2013 we analyzed 96 law firms' web sites (from the initial sample of 102, 6 law firms were excluded, because have stopped activity or without a web site, or with a web site under maintenance).

we utilized a dedicated software<sup>3</sup> in order to be able to manage email invitations and reminders in an automatic way and to control the data during and after the data collection. Moreover the choice of this platform allowed to trace which email addresses effectively compiled the questionnaire, therefore allowing for further verification of the data. The questionnaire was opened for one month (7 November - 7 December 2012). Unless there was an answer, or when a questionnaire was partially completed, three reminders were sent also to different email addresses. The questionnaire was opened 57 times, and compiled 35.

## 2.3 Limits

The problems encountered regard primarily a low response rate (35 out of 100) and the difficulty to validate the collected data: typical problems of surveys carried out through electronic questionnaires. Regarding questionnaires see Pickard and Caselli (*La Ricerca in Biblioteca: Come Migliorare i Servizi Attraverso Gli Studi Sull'utenza; Indagare col questionario. Introduzione alla ricerca sociale di tipo standard*) on self-completion questionnaires without a face to face contact with the researcher. Indeed when there is no direct contact between the researcher and the interviewee it is in fact much more difficult to avoid misunderstanding of the questions, ascertain trustfulness of the responses, and limit the abandonment of the compilation (Denscombe). However the functionalities of the tool utilized for distributing the questionnaires allowed to compare the answers of the law firms with the data provided in the Top 100, hence providing a double-check against the answers regarding the revenues, the number of the lawyers and the location of the headquarters. Once

---

<sup>3</sup>We chose Sondaggiofacile, <http://www.sondaggiofacile.com/>, free web site for creating surveys. It enabled a good personalization of the design and of the question structure.

the quality of the responses has been ascertained, although the number of the law firms surveyed was negligible, the data showed that their composition by revenue, location and number of the lawyers replicate quite faithfully the composition of the original sample (see questions 1 on the following page, 2 on page 207 and 3 on page 207). This partial overlap therefore allows to obtain from the collected data, if not an exhaustive description of the Italian situation, at least some common characteristics.

## 2.4 Questions

The questionnaire consists of 14 closed and open-ended questions distributed in 4 macro areas: *profile questions* (revenue, number of lawyers, location of the headquarters, name of the firm), *general information* (publications, presence of a library at the headquarters and in the branch offices), *resources, tools and services* (type of resources, tools and services offered by the law firm), *staff* (professional profile and qualifications). Lastly, the final open question offered a possibility to provide additional information on the library and the library personnel and to express personal opinions.

## 3 Results and analysis of the data

As anticipated, there are 35 law compiled the questionnaire, of which 8 partially. Where a comparison could be useful, the answers given to the questionnaire were cross-tabulated with the relative data on the population of the study provided by the journal Top Legal or the data collected in the web site analysis. What follows are the questions of the questionnaire and the collected data.

### 3.1 Profile questions (1-3)

These questions, in the opening part of the questionnaire, addressed the need to delineate the composition of the sample utilizing objective and easily verifiable data. The answers of every law firm were compared with the information provided in the Top Legal list, and, if necessary, were corrected and integrated. Therefore, the first three questions report the real data of the 35 participating law firms and are compared with the first 100 Italian law firms.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 1: The headquarters of the law firm is (Question 1):**

	sample 35		sample 100	
in Italy	21	60%	69	69%
abroad	14	40%	31	31%
	35	100%	100	100%

The first question (Table 1) gathered responses from all of the participants. The majority of the participating law firms have their head office in Italy (60%), confirming therefore a substantial overlap with the sample of reference (69%).

---

<sup>4</sup>The two groups of reference will be referred to herein as *sample 100* (Top Legal list) and *sample 35* (participants in the survey).

**Table 2: Number of the active lawyers in the Italian head office/s in 2011 were (Question 2):**

	sample 35		sample 100	
Less than 20	7	20%	25	25%
Between 20 and 50	10	29%	41	41%
Between 50 and 100	12	34%	20	20%
Between 100 and 200	4	11%	9	9%
More than 200	2	6%	5	5%
	35	100%	100	100%

Among the respondents to this question the prevailing number of the lawyers is in the mid range with more than 60% of the law firms comprised between the 20 and 100 lawyers. In this case the composition of the sample of the participants is not totally overlapping with the reference sample, mainly with regard to the ranges 20-50 and 50-100.

**Table 3: The revenue of the law firm in 2011 (in millions of €) (Question 3):**

	sample 35		sample 100	
Less than 10	15	43%	45	45%
Less than 20	9	25.5%	29	29%
Less than 50	9	25.5%	19	19%
More than 50	2	6%	7	7%
	35	100%	100	100%

The two samples are also similar in the revenue breakdown. Also in this case there are differences in the mid range, but they are of negligible entity.

**Name of the Law Firm (optional)** (Question 4):

This question, indicated as optional, that sought to determine the name of the firm, received responses in 54% of the cases. As far as the answer to this question was not necessary in order to trace the identity of the participating law firms, it is however interesting to notice that nearly half of the sample preferred not to associate the name of the law firm to the provided answers.

### 3.2 General information (5-7)

**Table 4: The law firm has publications in paper or digital format?** (Question 5):

Yes	25	78%
No	5	16%
N/A	2	6%
	32	100%

The majority of the law firms have been involved in publishing. This emphasizes that the law firms are also places where knowledge is not only used but also communicated. The collected data are supported by the web site analysis, from which it turned out that 59% of the sample, equal to 57 firms out of 96, communicates the presence of several publishing activities, from monographs to thematic portals with legal information. Many of the publications from the law firms are moreover freely available and accessible on-line in full text.

**Table 5: The head office of the firm has a library?** (Question 6)

Yes	33	100%
No	0	0%
N/A	0	0%
	33	100%



For this question (Table 5 on the facing page) as for the next one (Table 6) the meaning of the term library has not been specified, however implying physical aspects of the library, a place for studying and for the physical collection of the library, leaving to the next questions the task to identify resources and services on offer. Interestingly, the results (100% of respondents have a library) emphasize that the library is a necessary service to the practice of the surveyed law firms. However, due to the self-selection bias, it is possible that in the survey participated only law firms that have a library service.

**Table 6:** Information about the services provided by the library (Source of the data: web sites):

Library, reference, research centre	22	23%
Knowledge management	7	7%
Pictures of the library	20	21%
N/A	47	49%
	96	100%

From the web site analysis, as summarised in the above table, it is possible to gain additional insight. In particular, nearly half of the law firms surveyed explicitly referred to have a library, a research centre or knowledge management service and/or pictures of the library.

**Table 7: Branch offices of the firm have a library? (Question 7):**

Yes	26	79%
No	4	12%
The law firm does not have branch offices	3	9%
N/A	0	0%
	33	100%

The answers indicate that for the majority of the respondents with more than one office the information services are widespread. At this moment it has not been addressed in depth the accessibility of the local collection or rather services and resources, both from the branch offices and the headquarters (such as for example reference service, databases or e-journal).

### 3.3 Resources, tools and services (8-10)

**Table 8: What kind of resources are available to the lawyers? (Question 8):**

Databases	31	97%
Books	30	94%
Print journals	29	91%
E- journals	29	91%
Daily newspapers	27	84%
EBooks	6	19%
N/A	1	3%
Other (please, specify)	2	6%
-centro studi		
-prestiti interbibliotecari tramite catalogo ACNP		
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>32</b>	

According to the answers there are several resources available to the lawyers. In addition to the printed resources, although widespread (books 94%, journals 91%, newspapers 84%), there are databases (the most common, they are indeed used by 97% of the respondents) and e-journals. To find more about the variety of resources used by the corporate lawyers see Breslin ("Research and Resources for Corporate Lawyers").

Definitely the less common are eBooks, still they are used by 6 out

of 32 law firms. In the future it will be interesting to see if the possibilities brought in by the mobile devices and the adaptation of the legal publishing market would bring in an increase of this type of publications in legal libraries.<sup>5</sup>

The notice about an interlibrary loan through ACNP catalogue<sup>6</sup> offered the opportunity to reflect on the one hand on the provision of the services and on the other hand on the relationship between *corporate libraries* and other libraries. In fact, although the document delivery services are one of the most common (see the next question), this is however the only case in which the tool used (ACNP - Italian Catalogue of journals) to provide the service is mentioned. It is not, unfortunately, specified if the library uses exclusively the document delivery service through email or if it joined ACNP and/or uses automated exchange services like NILDE. In addition, the use of ACNP denotes the necessity regarding legal libraries to draw from a wealth of shared tools, used at the national level. On this basis, and considering a substantial affinity between legal libraries and academic libraries with regard to resources and services (see questions 9 on the following page and 10 on page 213) it is possible to foresee conditions for a potential collaboration between public and private libraries.

---

<sup>5</sup>Some of the publishers particularly active in the legal market, such as Wolters Kluwer Italy and Giuffrè, have currently on offer digital libraries, called respective "La mia biblioteca" and "Biblioteca volumi" that allow to access monographs also on mobile devices. Other publishers in the legal market, such as for example il gruppo Sole 24 ore offer new publications also in digital version with DRM.

<sup>6</sup>Given the type of catalogue, perhaps the intention was to refer to a document delivery service. In any case it is more correct to relate this answer to the next question, regarding services.

**Table 9: What kind of resources are available to the lawyers? (Question 9):**

Lending services of books and other resources	27	84%
Document delivery	26	81%
Courses on using databases and/or other resources	19	59%
Other (please, specify)	7	22%
<i>reference digitale</i>		
<i>corsi di marketing e di aggiornamento professionale</i>		
<i>servizio di knowledge management</i>		
<i>Centro Studi</i>		
<i>ricerche giuridiche fatte da uno stagista laureando in giurisprudenza</i>		
<i>partecipazioni seminari e/o convegni</i>		
<i>Seminari per formazione professionale continua.</i>		
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>32</b>	

Among the available services, book lending and reference service are the most common (available respectively in 84 and 81% of the law firms). The most interesting aspect as evidenced in this question turns out to be the involvement of the library in educational activities, such as, in the first instance, training on using databases and other information tools (59% of the law firms). Additional comments emphasized that the law firm library is truly at the core of learning for lawyers, as the library is committed to the provision of continuing professional education courses<sup>7</sup> and capacity building (marketing), both the administration of the attendance of lawyers in seminars or conferences organized by external bodies.

Additional information is also provided on the reference service:

---

<sup>7</sup>For the lawyers, like for other professions, starting from 2007 has been introduced a required continuing professional education. Lawyers must therefore participate in continuing professional education courses in order obtain required credits. The law firms can provide these courses themselves upon registration from the Italian Lawyers' Council. For further information see the website of the Italian Lawyers' Council in the section dedicated to continuing professional education: <http://www.consiglionazionaleforense.it/site/home/formazione/formazione-continua.html>.

one law firm emphasized that the bibliographical research is carried out by a graduate majoring in law, therefore paying special attention to the specific knowledge of the field. Interestingly, the reported here digital reference service is usually found in academic libraries and public libraries. Also in this case it could be interesting to learn more about it in particular with regard to the tools used for the distribution of the service (email? specific software?).

**Table 10: What kind of resources are available to the lawyers? (Question 10):**

Management software (for example Easylex)	27	87%
Library catalogue	22	71%
Knowledge Management System or Customer Relationship Management	13	42%
Internal wiki	8	26%
N/A	0	0%
Other (please, specify)	2	6%
<i>-centro studi</i>		
<i>-intranet di studio con data base interni ed esterni, informazioni e procedure</i>		
<b>Sample size</b>	<b>31</b>	

In this question we asked about some of the most common management software in law firms to understand the context of the library. The use of this software (modules such as customer records, accounting, etc.) is widespread and, interestingly, some of them already include functionalities designed to manage the library. It should be however stressed that there is a numerical mismatch between the number of libraries and library catalogues, it is therefore reasonable to assume that the library collection is not always managed in a

structured way. On the other hand Wikis, Knowledge management systems and Customer Relationship Management Systems represent advanced tools for the sharing of internal knowledge and even if at the moment they are less common, the data pointed out that a significant number of them are used among the respondents. The additional comments also pointed out the use of Intranet in law practice: in particular the Intranet represents a privileged point of access to the internal and external sources of information. Regarding the use of Wiki and Intranet in law firms see for example (Sarkanen260–265; Rudman250–253). Finally, one law firm responded in the same way to the questions regarding resources, tools and services: *Centro Studi*. Perhaps the answers provided to these questions do not reflect the internal structure of the firm, or maybe it was meant to indicate that there is an independent structure combining such responsibilities as the research, management and communication of information.

### 3.4 Library staff

**Table 11: Who is in charge of the library and/or information services and knowledge management? (Question 11):**

One dedicated person	11	35%
A person who also carries out other duties	11	35%
A dedicated team	7	23%
N/A	0	0%
Other (please, specify)	2	6%
-alcuni collaboratori dello Studio		
-i professionisti stessi		
	31	100%

In the law firms surveyed the library is managed equally by a dedicated person or a person that carries out also other duties (both 35%).

Also significant is the percentage of firms with a team in support of the internal information services. This aspect deserves further investigation, in particular with regard to the composition of the management teams (see question 14). The additional comments reported the management role carried out by lawyers and are reflected in the answers to the other questions, in particular number 13 on the following page, which acknowledged that the management of the library is mostly done by graduates in law. Another firm indicated, in a vague way, that some lawyers of the firm are managers of the library services.

**Table 12: Which is the highest qualification of the person in charge of the law firm library and/or of bibliographical services and knowledge management? (Question 12):**

High School Diploma	5	17%
Post High School Education	0	0%
Bachelor degree	21	70%
Master's degree	1	3%
PhD	0	0%
N/A	2	7%
Other (please, specify)	1	3%
<i>-avvocato</i>		
	30	100%

In most cases (70%) the person in charge of the knowledge management services holds a Bachelor degree, and in one case a Master's degree. Second most common are respondents with a High School Diploma equal to 17%. The only additional comment pointed out that a lawyer is in charge of the library (see questions 13 on the next page and 14).

**Table 13: If the person in charge of the law firm library and/or the bibliographical services holds at least a bachelor degree what is the specific field of study? (Question 13):**

Librarianship or similar	3	11%
Humanities	5	19%
Law	15	56%
Sciences	1	4%
N/A	3	11%
Other (please, specify)	0	0%
	27	100%

This question sought to gain insight into what extent the library staff has a background in library and information science, therefore, how important is this qualification in the selection of the candidates. The answers, however, show that the majority of the library managers in law firms earned their title in law, following are the humanities with 19% of the respondents and then librarianship, with only 3 out of 27 respondents. Probably still much weighs the subject while specific and wide ranging competences are less relevant, although applicable to fully profit in even completely different professional domains.

**Other information on the library (optional) (Question 14):**

*La biblioteca è gestita da una bibliotecaria dedicata con il supporto di un "comitato Biblioteca" formato da professionisti di Studio, mentre per quanto concerne la "gestione della conoscenza" un comitato formato da professionisti di Studio propone aggiornamenti al sistema documentale.*

Although only one firm provided additional information, the data turned out to be very interesting for our study. In particular it offers an overview of some aspects of the knowledge management in the firm, clearly separating out the management of the library from the



Knowledge management. In both areas, however, the organization has a team of lawyers, managed by a designated staff as far as the library is concerned. It is possible to hypothesize that lawyers coming from various practice areas are part of the committees in order to represent all the areas of practice of the firm. The skills of the lawyers can be spent to take decisions about the acquisition, management and the review of book collections and documents and to support the bibliographical research.

## 4 Conclusions

This study, although carried out on a limited sample, has showed that the law firms involved in the survey present wide-ranging characteristics regardless of revenue and location of the firm. The firms showed pronounced patterns typical of most of the respondents, including the publishing activities, the spread of the library, which is regarded as one of the fundamental support services and a wide range of libraries in branch offices, and a wide use of resources, including databases, books and journals. The services and tools show a diversified picture, in which there are *standard* services such as lending and reference (document delivery) with the support of a management tool (catalogue) together with courses on using databases and continuing professional education. This forms a close relationship between resources, tools and services. Moreover, there is a wide variety of legal tools in use, also taking into consideration the distribution of advanced software like wiki, KMS, CRM. Regarding professional qualifications the majority of the participants seems to entrust the knowledge management to staff graduated in law. In this regard, it is necessary to reflect on the profile and recognition that the library professionals have elsewhere than in the public sector. Since the specific *information science* skills can be spent elsewhere,

it is important to increase and to improve training courses to prepare the professionals to cater for the demand of the private sector. On the sidelines of this study it is possible to emphasize that the available resources and services are similar to those offered in academic libraries, in particular the reference, interlibrary loan and the use of databases. This enables to imagine a collaboration between public and private libraries (collaboration in some cases already started), supported by the interest of the law firms to distribute a part of their internal knowledge (as pointed out by the publishing activities).

## 5 Future studies

This study can be a valid point of reference for further research on law firm libraries. The results showed that more than one of the major law firms has a library, while the data from the web sites suggest an even greater spread of libraries and knowledge management services. The first point of interest could be to investigate how these support services are conveyed to the public, and in particular to the customers.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, it could be useful to investigate more in depth (through interviews or focus group with stakeholders) some aspects of the organization of the law firms with such characteristic, as for example the management by a team or the relationships between library services and knowledge management.<sup>9</sup> Finally, it

---

<sup>8</sup>The analysis of the web sites has not been thorough, but enough to evidence some recurring characteristics. In particular, the use of pictures or references to the library as a prestigious symbol rather than part of practice. In fact what is lacking is the description of library services, or its long term effects on the performance of the lawyers.

<sup>9</sup>The web site analysis pointed out that knowledge management and information services are only referred to in a general manner, and they are variously located on the web sites: in some cases mentioned along with the publishing activities, in others as one of the services for lawyers (under recruiting), in other cases in the "about us"

could be useful to compare professional profiles in Italy and abroad, for example in the English speaking countries.<sup>10</sup> This would allow to know solutions adopted in contexts with similar features and issues.

*This study is only a first step in order to know the state of the art of the Italian law libraries. Similar studies with a purpose to investigate in depth and by involving a wider and a more representative sample, and using various methods for data collection could give interesting and comparable results with the data of this study.*

---

section of the firm. Therefore it would be necessary to actually check in what way these services are provided.

<sup>10</sup>The web site analysis pointed out only a small number of specific professionals in the staff directory. The international law firms websites contain different profiles, such as "research librarian" and "knowledge management lawyer" pertaining respectively to the technical and legal staff.

## References

- Agnoli, Maria Stella. *Il Disegno Della Ricerca Sociale*. Roma: Carocci, 2004. (Cit. on p. 203). Print.
- Bassani Antivari, Gaia. "Gestire La Conoscenza Per Migliorare L'efficienza e Garantire Continuità Al Cliente". *11° Meeting ACEF (R)INNOVARE LO STUDIO dell'Avvocato*. Milano, Italia, 2011. (Cit. on p. 201). Print.
- Breslin, Jas. "Research and Resources for Corporate Lawyers". *Legal Information Management* 11.1. (2011): 65–68. (Cit. on p. 210). Print.
- Capitani, Paola. *Il knowledge management*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2006. (Cit. on p. 202). Print.
- Caselli, Marco. *Indagare col questionario. Introduzione alla ricerca sociale di tipo standard*. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2007. (Cit. on p. 204). Print.
- Denscombe, Martyn. *The Good Research Guide: For Small-scale Social Research Projects*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003. (Cit. on p. 204). Print.
- Di Carlo, Amalia. "Stesso Podio sull'Olimpo". *Top Legal* 6. (2012): 40–63. (Cit. on p. 202). Print.
- Maiello, Rosa. "Law Libraries in Italy". *World Library and Information Congress: 75th IFLA General Conference and Council 23-27 August 2009*. Milano, Italia, 2009. (Cit. on p. 201). Print.
- Pickard, Alison J. *La Ricerca in Biblioteca: Come Migliorare i Servizi Attraverso Gli Studi Sull'utenza*. Milano: Bibliografica, 2010. (Cit. on p. 204). Print.
- Pitrone, Maria Concetta. "L'intervista Con Questionario". *Ricerca Sociale: Dal Progetto Dell'indagine Alla Costruzione Degli Indici*. Carocci, 2007. (Cit. on p. 203). Print.
- Profili, Silvia. *Il Knowledge Management: Approcci Teorici e Strumenti Gestionali*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2004. (Cit. on p. 202). Print.
- Rudman, Sarah. "Knowledge Management and the Intranet at Field Fisher Waterhouse". *Legal Information Management* 9.4. (2009): 250–253. (Cit. on p. 214). Print.
- Sarkanen, Anneli. "Using Wikis as Cost Saving Tools at Field Fisher Waterhouse". *Legal Information Management* 10.4. (2010): 260–265. (Cit. on p. 214). Print.

EWELINA MELNAROWICZ, La Scala Studio Legale.

[emelnarowicz@gmail.com](mailto:emelnarowicz@gmail.com)

FEDERICA VIGNATI, Università degli Studi di Milano.

[federica.vignati@gmail.com](mailto:federica.vignati@gmail.com)

---

Melnarowicz, E., F. Vignati. "Libraries and law firms in Italy". *JLIS.it*. Vol. 4, n. 2 (Luglio/July 2013): Art: #8800. DOI: [10.4403/jlis.it-8800](https://doi.org/10.4403/jlis.it-8800). Web.

**ABSTRACT:** This essay presents the results of the first study on law firm libraries in Italy. To date there are only few publications on this topic, therefore it has been considered interesting to determine the distribution of law libraries and professionals involved. The study, which was based on a sample population of 100 largest law firms in Italy by revenue, employed an online questionnaire and the data were collected through web site analysis aiming to identify a library, a knowledge management service and editorial activities. Besides variables regarding revenue, location and number of lawyers were extracted from the data of the sample population in order to validate the results. The study determined, even though the response rate was quite low (35% of the population) thus the sample is partially representative, that most of the law firm libraries show characteristics in common including resources, services and tools which may represent a large-scale standard.

**KEYWORDS:** Italy; Knowledge management; Law firms; Organizational culture; Quantitative research; Special libraries

---

Submitted: 2013-02-28

Accepted: 2013-04-30

Published: 2013-07-01

